

Jessyka Scoppetta  
106 Joan Circle, Manchester, CT 06040  
February 17, 2022

Re: Department of Education's Legislative Agenda

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jessyka Scoppetta and I am from Manchester. I have two daughters – Olivia (8) and Margot (5) - who attend the CREC Montessori Magnet School. I am writing to ask you to please support an increase in the RESC state magnet grant.

Olivia and Margot benefit greatly from the extraordinary opportunities they experience every day at the CREC Montessori Magnet School. I am an educator myself, and after researching early childhood educational programs, I knew I wanted my daughters to attend a Montessori school, which prioritizes experiential learning, freedom and independence, an individualized curriculum for the whole child, and mixed age classrooms. However, most accredited Montessori schools are private, and tuition can cost upwards of \$25,000 a year, per child, placing a Montessori education out of reach for many families. Therefore, I was thrilled when my oldest, Olivia, received placement at CREC Montessori Magnet through the RSCO lottery as a pre-K3 student, and then again to have her younger sister placed there as well 3 years later. They are now in 3rd grade and Kindergarten. I have seen them both blossom in the Montessori environment. Margot had a particularly rough transition from home to school, but the Montessori practice of keeping the same classroom and teacher for three years, enabled her to progress at her own pace in an environment in which she felt increasingly comfortable. Now in her final year of primary, she is leader in her classroom and role model to younger children who feeling apprehensive about being away from home in the same ways she was. Additionally, Olivia has struggled with some reading skills. However, because of the Montessori principles of one-in-one teacher interactions and independent work cycles, Olivia has been able to work on developing her reading skills without feeling singled out or discouraged, which has helped to maintain her confidence and love of books.

While I came to the CREC system initially for the Montessori opportunity, we intend to stay in the CREC magnet school system because of CREC's commitment to quality education in a diverse environment and to the principles of equity and inclusion. My daughters learn better and are more prepared for the real world as a result of working alongside other students from different backgrounds. They have friends from Hartford, Vernon, Wolcott, West Hartford, and Tolland, just to name a few, in addition to their neighborhood friends in Manchester. Seeing how different families operate and experience our world, has offered my daughters more opportunities to develop empathy, compassion, and deeper understanding of the world around them and the challenges others face.

In my eyes, quality educational programs, like CREC magnet schools, that help to increase tolerance, promote equity, and develop thoughtful citizens are of the utmost importance to our society. However, without sustainable funding, CREC's 16 innovative magnet schools are at risk as they will be forced to either cut programming or to increase the tuition costs they charge to local school districts. This potential tuition increase which disproportionately hurts Alliance Districts, including Manchester, where I live. Therefore, I am asking the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of *all* students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of providing their students a chance to thrive. Currently, the Sheff Stipulated Agreement requires the expansion of schools and program, but before you add any more schools, please adequately fund those that you have established and that

are flourishing. I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and available and have demonstrated success before you consider funding new school choice options.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jessyka Scoppetta